

REDISCOVERY OF THE GOLDEN GECKO *CALODACTYLODES AUREUS* (BEDDOME) IN THE EASTERN GHATS OF ANDHRA PRADESH¹

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(With a colour plate)

The Golden Gecko *Calodactyloides aureus* was described in 1870 by H. R. Beddome who collected ten specimens (Smith 1935) from the Tirupati hills (named as "Tripatty hills" — Beddome 1870) in the Eastern Ghats complex in the then North Arcot district of Madras Presidency. All known specimens are in the British Museum.

The Tirupati hills (13°41'N and 79°21'E; in the Chittoor district) are part of the Eastern Ghats Complex in southern Andhra Pradesh. The hills are better known as the 'Seshachalam' ranges and together with the Velikondas, Palakondas, Yerramalais, Lankamalais and Nallamalai ranges form the Eastern Ghats complex in southern Andhra Pradesh.

The Velikondas (running north-easterly from Tirupati) are the eastern most among the ranges. Its southern tip lies adjacent to the 'Seshachalam's and has continuous forests from Mamandur-Balapalli areas to Erpedu. North of Cheyyeru river (which cuts across the Seshachalams) are the Palakonda ranges that continue till the confluence of the Pennar and Cheyyeru.

The varied terrain of steep slopes, deep valleys, plains and wide plateaux hold different forest types that can be said to characterise

each topographical feature. The plains have typical Thorn Scrub types, though mostly overrun by *Prosopis*. The foothills, wherever forested, shows patches of Non-Thorny Scrub Jungle followed by Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest Types.

The upper slopes and the plateaux have a forest type of pure stands of Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*). Most of the plateaux show Miscellaneous Forest Types consisting of *Eugenia*, *Pterocarpus*, *Shorea* and also *Eucalyptus* wherever planted. The valleys are the most spectacular, with very luxurient vegetation dominated by tall *Shorea*, Mango and Tamarind trees, which may be due to numerous nearly perennial streams.

These waterfall-fed deep valleys show continuous perpendicular and vertical fissures. The streams that lead away from the fall areas have numerous boulders strewn along their path. It was in these areas that the Golden Gecko was found and collected in July 1985, 115 years after their original description. Specimens were obtained and seen in Seshachalam and Velikonda ranges and may occur in suitable habitats in the other ranges also.

Morphometry

Calodactyloides aureus is characterised by the two horizontal expansions on the vertical eye-slit; and, digits with large trapezoid distal and penultimate expansions among other

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characters (Beddome 1870). The morphometric details of the specimens collected are given in the table below:

Characters	BNHS Collection Registration Nos.			
	1408	1409	1416	1410
sex	♂	♂	♂	♀
Snout to vent	76	81	65	62
Tail	91	80	82	72
Head Length (snout to tympanum)	22	20	21	25
Head width	16	20	15	15
Axilla to Groin	40	36	30	33
Fore Limb	32	32	29	29
Hind Limb	44	44	38	40
Scales on the belly	32	33	32	34
Eye to Snout	10	11	9	9
Eye to Ear opening	5	7	6	6
Diameter of eye	6	7	6	7
Interorbital space	4	5	3	3
Upper Labials	13	12/13	12	12
Lower Labials	13	13	12	12
Digital expansion	2	2	2	2
Size of the gonad	small	medium	large	small

All measurements are in millimetres.

REFERENCES

BEDDOME, R. H. (1870): Descriptions of some New Lizards from the Madras Presidency. Madras Monthly Journal of Medical Science, Vol. I: 30-35 (Art. II). Reprint in *J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 59: 430-436.

Colour variation

Beddome in his original description mentioned that the Golden Gecko was brilliantly golden in colour. Only two of our specimens were golden. One was brownish black and one was slightly golden yellow with close black granules giving it a black appearance dorsally. One individual was pure golden yellow while one 'Golden Gecko' was distinctly reddish without any sign of golden colour.

The stomach held insect remains, mainly hymenoptera (ants) and beetles in all cases.

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